DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 423 709 FL 801 240

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TITLE	ESL Journal Writing: Learning, Reflections, and Adjustments to American Life.
INSTITUTION	San Diego Consortium for Workforce Education and Lifelong Learning, CA.
PUB DATE	1997-12-00
NOTE	52p.; "With Paul Erickson, M. Laura Fernandez, and Gloria Martinez." Project supported by the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Acculturation; Adult Education; Classroom Techniques; *Community Colleges; *English (Second Language); *Immigrants; *Journal Writing; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; State Standards; Statewide Planning; *Student Journals; Two Year Colleges; Writing Instruction
IDENTIFIERS	California; San Diego Community College District CA

ABSTRACT

The report, based on a study of journal entries written by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students in San Diego Community Colleges (California), examines the value of journal writing for ESL learning and acculturation and offers classroom techniques for its use. An introductory section describes the study and its outcomes. Chapter 1 looks at how ESL journal writing can assist ESL students in acculturation, how it fits into the language-learning experience, policy and practice in ESL writing from national down to local levels, and California statewide ESL model standards. Chapter 2 discusses how the seven proficiency levels outlined in California ESL standards apply to classroom teaching. Chapter 3 looks at how ESL writing exercises can reveal issues that matter to students in the process of adjusting to American life, including stages of adjustment, family concerns, the need for role models, and necessary coping skills. Chapter 4 focuses on use of ESL writing in the classroom, including dialogue journals, buddy journals, audiotaped responses to journal entries, online writing, writing with elders, literature and writing, and providing feedback to students. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ED 423 709

ESL Journal Writing: Learning, Reflections, and Adjustments to American Life

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book was developed with the assistance and support of many individuals. First, we would like to thank Chancellor Augustine Gallego of the San Diego Community College District for his vision of adult education reform that makes projects like this possible. Provost Rod Smith of the Continuing Education Division was always willing to help, as well as the Deans at Mid City Center, Barbara Penn, Bill Grimes, and Joan Henkleman. At Cesar Chavez Center, Dean Marc Cuellar was very supportive. The project never would have been possible without the assistance of Gretchen Bitterlin, the ESL Resource Instructor for the San Diego Community College District, Continuing Education Division.

Teachers who participated in the writing project over the past few years include Jacolyn Clifford, Kathy Cox, Patricia Irby, Alma McGee, David Santana, Rosa Limon and Remedios Lopez. Their willingness to participate was appreciated and their interest in helping their students was inspiring.

From the CWELL, we first and foremost thank Thomas G. Sticht, who provided ongoing guidance and encouragement. Paul Erickson was invaluable in managing the database, Laura Fernandez not only typed journal entries but also helped collect all data and provided many interesting insights into the student writing. Gloria Martinez also typed journal entries and read many drafts of project reports.

Thanks to Doug Cook of DCWorks who has served as the CWELL desktop publisher for the last five years has been creative, good humored and has made our work much more enjoyable.

We wish to thank Richard Madsen for his perspective on the importance of community, and the need for ESL students to replace the communities they left behind with new ones. His interest in this project and his willingness to meet with us to share ideas was very helpful.

And finally, and most importantly, thank you to all the adult ESL students who agreed to participate in this project. The writing they did was interesting and educational for us as well as for them.

This project was funded by the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund to which we express gratitude. However, the ideas and opinions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official positions, opinions or policies of the Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund or the San Diego Community College District. For further information about the CWELL, contact Barbara McDonald at (619) 222-9621 or Thomas Sticht at (619) 444-9595.

BARBARA MCDONALD AND JUDITH ROSSELLI

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JOURNAL WRITING IN ESL:

A GLIMPSE INTO ADJUSTMENT TO AMERICAN LIFE

BACKGROUND

"In my native country I didn't work. I had to study and sometimes I helped my mother in the home. Sometimes when I came back from school and I had already done my homework I helpher with supper, and Cleaning the house or sometime I done the dishes now in San Diego I work in a restaruant and sometimes I help to serve the food it is something very easy because I had some experience before when I helped my mother with supper and to serve the food."

This report is about a collection of 1248 journal writing samples, like the one above, written by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students in the Adult Continuing Education Division of the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD). In Fall 1995 and Spring 1996, these journal writing entries were collected in several ESL classes of different ESL levels. Adult ESL students agreed to participate in a project, organized by the CWELL, to better understand how ESL is taught and learned in the community college setting.

As part of this project, teachers in a total of eight classes were asked to have their students write in journal notebooks once a week for two different semesters. Only two of the teachers had used journal writing before but they all agreed to use it. The CWELL provided composition notebooks to the students. Teachers were not given any instructions about how to use writing in their classes or told to use any particular topics. It appears, though, that all teachers used some form of prompts and interestingly, many of the prompts appear to be the same in the various classes across different levels. Toward the end of the semester, the journal notebooks were collected, photocopied and returned to the students. The journal entries were typed, as is - with no corrections, into the computer and read by two action researchers.

It was apparent right from the start that we were being given access to something very important and deeply personal.

The CWELL research assistants who had done the typing had forewarned us; they were very interested in the writings and kept saying "Oh, you should see what the students are writing about. This is really interesting." When the two authors read the essays, we agreed. This report will detail some of the results from this glimpse into the thoughts of immigrants to San Diego, California.

The initial reason writing was used in this project was to try to seek, in more individual and descriptive form, an understanding of what the students were learning and thinking about. In the overall project, we also used (1) quizzes of content material covered; (2) standardized tests - the CASAS and the ABLE vocabulary test; (3) surveys about English spoken outside the class; and (4) self-perception of ability to speak, read, write and listen in English. These latter measures are presented in other documents[1] and did provide important information but the writing added yet another dimension. We were interested to see how students would use their language skills to write about topics of interest to them. In this way we could actually "observe" the use of English instead of students' self-reports regarding whether or not they felt they were doing well.

From the journal entries that resulted, several issues arose. One important question concerned the usefulness of writing as a way to learn a second language. What can writing reveal about the students' ability to use language? Another question raised was how much writing was actually being done in the classroom and from that question, a review of national, state and local level "policies" on writing was conducted. This review involved study of the California State ESL Model Standards. So, an ESL writing rubric was developed[2] from the model standards and used in a sub-study done with 360 of the entries - the first and last journal entry for those students who had at least one month separation between journal entries. Finally, an analysis of the topics written about by the students was done and the findings from this are in Chapter Four.

Through this project, we learned more about students and teachers as well as the process of writing. First, although we don't know how much or in what ways ESL instructors in the San Diego Community College District are using student writing , it is being urged by the ESL District office.[3] There are no data to show how many teachers use writing in the classroom.

This reflects the state of affairs around the country as well. Second, when writing is used (at least according to national reports), it is often reserved for more advanced level students who already have some command of the language. Our findings suggest that this is not necessary, that students at all stages of learning English can write something and often will write about topics that might have been considered too difficult to describe in a lesson.

Based on our project we recommend that teachers at all levels use student writing. It is a good way to help students "get involved" in the language and it gives the teacher a very good idea of how much the student is able to communicate. Language is not only a tool to get a job and earn money, but it can be used as a tool to make sense out of one's life in a new world and reinforce other basic language skills. The journal entries could make the student more attuned to their process of separation and assimilation in an attempt to belong, and, it could also make teachers more aware of what the students are going through.

And finally, and most importantly, we found evidence of certain key themes of adjustment to American life that were present in the writings of students at all the levels of ESL; adult students, whether they were writing at an advanced level or at a lower level, reinforced what one another said. The last chapter provides a review of innovative ways to use writing in ESL that don't overburden the teacher while allowing all students to get involved in writing and in communicating with each other.

This report will provide information that can be used by the teacher and the administrator and will lead to further questions about writing in ESL. More research is definitely in order.

1 McDonald, B., Huie, C., Sticht, T., & Grimes, W. (1994). Learning in the Action Research Center (ARC) Community: Inquiry, Reflection and Change in the Delivery System for Continuing Education Services for Adults in the San Diego Community College District. San Diego, CA: San Diego Community College District, Action Research Center.

2 CASAS also has developed an ESL writing rubric that is very good. B. McDonald attended a workshop and was taught how to use it, however, this was many months after the CWELL rubric was developed.

3 Gretchen Bitterlin, ESL Resource Instructor for the SDCCD Continuing Education Division says that there has been no formal study of the numbers of teachers who use writing in the ESL classes. According to her, the teachers probably all use it but in what ways and how often, she couldn't say. Personal communication, September, 1997.

CHAPTER ONE

ESL JOURNAL WRITING: AN AID TO NEWCOMERS IN THE MELTING POT

"I from Somalia. I leveng San Diego five days. I leveng my freind."

INTRODUCTION

The United States has long been considered a "melting pot," with newcomers arriving every day to participate in the American Dream. How do immigrants and refugees adjust to American Life and how do they "become American?" Many tax-paying citizens of the United States have stereotyped experiences with and expectations of these newcomers and their attempts to become American. The resources available to assist newcomers to the United States are perceived by the taxpayers to be dwindling, many of the immigrants are perceived to be without legal status; Americans are worried about their own economic futures and sharing jobs and funding with those from other countries is not considered a high priority.

Immigrants and refugees continue to arrive, however, and somehow work their way into the fabric of American neighborhoods. Since they, for the most part, do not speak English, understanding their adjustment into American life has not been available to average Americans and therefore their plight is largely a drama carried on behind closed doors. The U.S. citizens who most frequently do understand their struggles are English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teachers. These teachers provide one of the first "welcomes" into American life and assist ESL students in understanding the culture and teach them the language and the ways they must adjust in order to fit in and make a living for themselves and their families.

English-as-a-Second-Language instruction is a large part of the adult education system in the United States. The immigration that has taken place in the last decade has "overwhelmed" the adult basic education system. In a 1994 report of the National Evaluation of Adult Education Programs,[1] the number of adults in need of English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) were estimated based on 1990 census data using several criteria upon which to base this categorization.

These criteria included (1) numbers of adults in the United States who had less than a 9th grade education, (2) numbers who had more than a 9th grade education but no high school diploma or Equivalency certificate, or (3) those who spoke English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL), whether or not they had a high school diploma. These estimates show a total of ten million individuals who are potential ESL students. In terms of actual participation rates, in 1991-92, one million, four hundred and eighty thousand (1,484,600) individuals in the United States were enrolled in adult education in ABE, ASE or ESL. Of these three categories, the highest proportion belong in ESL. On a national level, about half of the adult education participation is by students requiring ESL instruction. Furthermore, about 75% of the ESL target population is located in the West, and approximately 87% of the target population from the West in need of adult education are in need of ESL.

These numbers and proportions are consistent with actual numbers of clients served in adult education programs at the San Diego Community College District (SDCCD), which is the focus of this report. Figures from the office of Instructional Services office in the SDCCD show that a large proportion of instruction in adult education is provided to ESL students; in 1992-1993, the total ESL population was 25,735 compared to the ABE population of 3,088.[2]

In what ways do immigrants become part of the American experience? One of the ways is through the ESL instruction they receive at adult schools such as those operated by the SDCCD mentioned above.

Instruction is given in speaking, reading, writing and understanding the English language and of these four language skills, writing is the focus of this report.

Writing is considered a "productive" skill as opposed to a "receptive" skill (like reading and listening) and is sometimes considered too advanced for low level students. Also, journal writing on the part of students requires quite a bit of time and there is even more time on the part of the teacher if the journal entries are read. Too, writing is not considered as critical as speaking in terms of survival in the new culture and many would say that journal writing is not a skill that most adults will transfer to their lives outside the classroom. Nevertheless, 1248 of student writing samples were collected in the Fall of 1995 and the Spring of 1996 in order to attempt to use it as a measure of learning and a way to understand the adult students better. The subsequent work that was done in analyzing and interpreting these student writing samples resulted in a positive view of the value of writing for ESL students.

How Writing Fits into the Second-language Learning Experience

> *I'm a little bit confused to study English now. Because I have been hare almost 1 year, but my English especialy speaking is still terrible. I don't know how I should study. What do you think that what subject is the most important to study English speaking, reading, writing or vocabulary?*

The four language skills involved in learning English as a Second Language are listening, speaking, reading and writing. The student who wrote the essay above was asking a question that ESL teachers ask, too. What are the best ways to help students perfect their English language skills? And, if speaking is the skill they wish to master, should they mostly practice speaking or would the other language skills help them with their speaking?

Listening and reading are referred to as receptive skills, while speaking and writing are called productive skills. Some educators focus on the receptive skills in the early stages of instruction, and as the students progress, introduce more of the productive skills. Some educators feel especially strongly that writing is not essential in the early development of language.

Some believe that the individual has not received enough background in comprehending the language in order to produce it. Maybe the following entry would be such an example of a student who doesn't know enough English to make sense of the words:

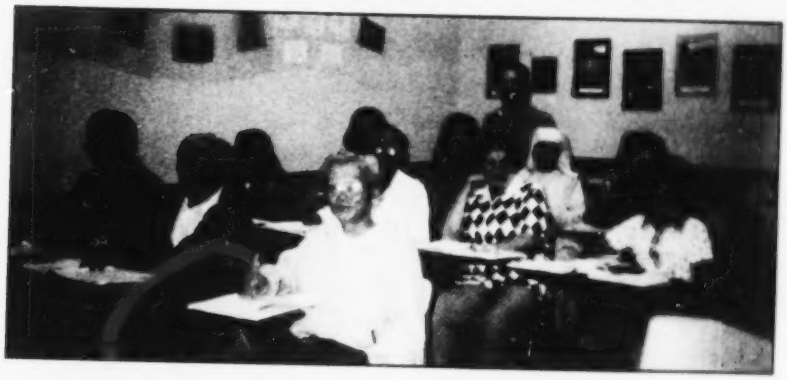
I talk to my hussond in English She washer her
The children in this 6 poow ater I listen a t.v. program in English

According to Emig[3] it is better to view the distinctions between the four language functions as first order and second order instead of productive and receptive. She defines writing as originating and creating a unique verbal construct that is graphically recorded. Therefore you can see it and revisit it more than once to make sense of it. She views writing in the classroom as a mode of learning that is critical. Although many view speaking (talking) as the key skill, she discusses the differences between the two to show the equal importance of writing:

- Writing is a learned behavior whereas talking is more natural;
- Writing is a technological device that results in a visible graphic product, talking usually does not;
- Because there is a visible graphic product, writing tends to be more responsible and committed;
- Because writing is often "our representation of the world made visible" writing is more readily a form and source of learning than is talking.[4]

The contemporary approach to teaching English as a Second Language is to present a language holistically, that is to say, by teaching the four skills simultaneously. Some students take a long time to express themselves orally in a new language. They are fearful of producing speech that might be judged imperfect, which would be immediately expressed by the receiver through facial expressions, body language and even verbal corrections. The result of this exchange, too often, is that the speaker refuses to say another word. Luckily, this is not always the case.

Well I like this class because I think am improuving my self to be able totalkwrite and speak clearly so every body anderdstand what am talking about. I have notice that theperson who doesn't speak English his life is harder than any other person who does. You know some times when we are learning to pronaunce if someone hearsyou and if you do it good good but if you pronaunce it bad they will laught about how you speak....But you know you will do it some time just keep on trying and yu'll get it. I love this class because it is going to help me a lot. Every day we learn new things we are here to learn. I wish some day I reach out my dreams.



In contrast to speaking, writing can be a safer expression of a student's ideas. There is no immediate feedback, no external control on the output of the writer. Speech, which is used to make sense out of one's new situation in a myriad of ways, comes slowly and painfully in a desire to speak perfectly. Writing, which can also be used to make sense out of an immigrant's new life comes slowly, but perhaps not as painfully as speaking. Another consideration between speaking and writing is that perfection is not judged by others as immediately in writing as in talking. Listening responses are immediate, often with interruptions; writing responses occur later, after the essay is completed. The result is a continuance of the flow of thought.

Stephen Krashen is the theorist many ESL teachers cite when discussing the reasons for teaching ESL certain ways. Krashen's ideas specify the importance of comprehensible input, stressing the need for students to be exposed to many examples of the language they are trying to learn before being required to produce it. Regarding the use of writing in ESL[5], he says that very little research has been done on the subject, but the data that exists shows a similarity to writing in the first language.

He suggests that understanding "reader-based prose" in the first language is a help to knowing how to write in the second language. As in his research on learning to speak English, his advice for writing in ESL is to not overcorrect grammar and spelling. He notes that students at the more beginning levels are usually worried about these issues more than writers at the more advanced levels who know they can revise. Krashen also mentions that ESL students themselves don't feel that writing, in an as yet imperfectly acquired language, is a problem. The problems concern how to put the ideas together.

According to Staton[6], teaching writing is more than just providing technical instruction anyway, it is about shaping attitudes toward literacy and specifically dialogues about ideas. In this, she refers to the notions of Paulo Friere who considered literacy as a social/cultural and social action activity. In the work Staton writes about, writing is done in the form of dialogue journals, a technique currently being written about in education. When using dialogue journals, the student writes in his/her journal and the teacher responds conversationally in writing. The student then responds to the teacher's response, and so on. Dialogue journals contribute to the needs of the adult learner in several ways.

- They provide materials that reflect students' lives, i.e., information about their own lives and thoughts.
- They extend literacy beyond basic skills acquisition, so that the complexities involved in adult lives are incorporated into their literacy experiences.
- Dialogue journals manifest the principles of Freire's dialogic model of adult literacy in which literacy is genuine two-way communication.
- Finally, dialogue journals are empowering because instead of passive listening in the process of learning English, learners are engaged in making sense of their own language experience.

As said by Staton, many ESL learners are tired adults at the end of a long work day who are hoping to learn something without expending more energy. But by expending energy in the form of journal writing, they are provided with their own motivations for learning.

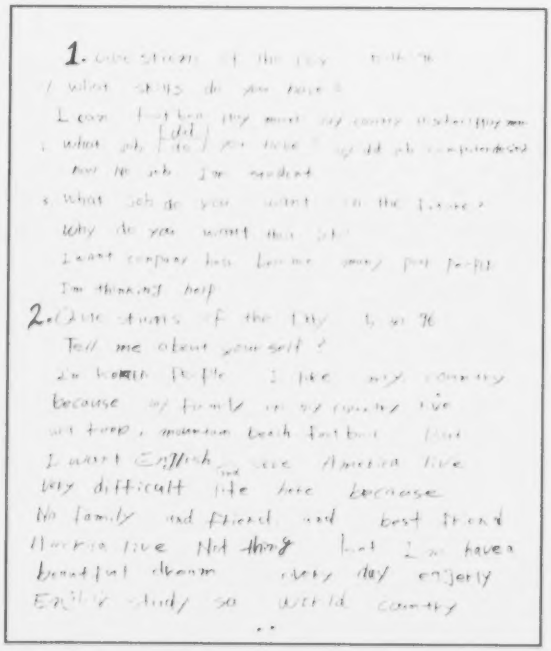
An important reason for writing, to those who use it, is that when people articulate connections between new information and their prior knowledge, they learn and understand the new information better (Fulwiler, 1987).[7]

Some exponents of writing would say that writing is an instrument of thought, that only when people write do they discover what they know. Also, writing has as an advantage in that people use more sophisticated vocabulary while writing than they will probably use in spoken language.

But writing has been emphasized less in the ESL classroom than the other language functions. Leki[8] suggests that this may be because ESL students are perceived not to need writing in the low level, low-paying jobs that they are likely to get. According to Leki, writing is considered the last language skill.

Leki also discusses other reasons journal writing may not be used. He says it was criticized by some for focusing too much on personal experience with the concern that immigrants would not be comfortable revealing personal information. Also, there was concern that this approach would misrepresent the importance of grammatical accuracy as not important. So, for these reasons, journal writing has been questioned.

According to others, however, personal reflective writing is a good thing for ESL students. It helps them understand themselves and their experience (Carroll, 1994).[9] Carroll embarked upon journal writing believing it would help his students as well as have positive impacts on teaching for several reasons. First, he expected journal writing would be a powerful language learning experience and, second, that it would provide valuable data for research into the writing experience and the language learning experience. Both expectations were confirmed. Students wrote about meaningful topics and he was able to collect and analyze information about their writing. These expectations were also behind the CWELL's reasons for undertaking journal writing. But how is journal writing looked upon by the San Diego Community College District? How are teachers trained to use writing in the ESL classroom?



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From Policy to Practice: ESL Writing at the National, State and Local Levels

Learning a second language in order to fully participate in the society is a lengthy process. According to some estimates, it may take two years to learn conversational English similar to other non-native speaking individuals,[10] whereas it could take up to eight years to learn English well enough to use it in an academic program and in order to read English.[11] These estimates are variable and dependent upon the level of literacy already obtained in the native language. At the SDCCD, there is a range of literacy levels in the native language ffom those immigrants who are highly literate and professionally trained in their own country to those who do not read and write their own native language. SDCCD puts those students who do not read and write into a special low literacy/low level ESL class. In this class, they will be helped to acquire these important literacy skills.[12]

The approach in the SDCCD to teaching ESL is the communicative approach.[13] This approach stresses teaching language for functional purposes and does not stress grammar and syntax. Instead of teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolation, the student is taught to use the language skills and receive feedback from the listener as to whether or not his/her statement was understood. This way, the speaker revises his or her statement to try to communicate the meaning if necessary. The curriculum outlines that are available through the ESL Office are geared around the life-skills of enrolling in school, filling out forms, going to the doctors office, grocery shopping, and so on. The course outlines suggest in what order to cover these topics but teachers may vary from this if they find their students need a different sequence of instruction.

The CWELL implemented a Student Writing Contest for the Community Exchange newspaper.[14] Some teachers welcomed this opportunity for their students to write an essay and submit it for publication, if theirs were selected as a winner. But other teachers said that it was a good idea but it interfered with their planned instruction, or that it would be too much work to get their students to understand what they were supposed to write about and to have them write and revise their work. In this way, the impression was received that writing was so much work that it took more effort than it was worth in many cases.

This attitude led us to the District ESL office to see what was available to help teachers teach writing. The ESL office has shelves of books about teaching writing in the ESL Library and Department office. In addition, there is a curriculum available to help teachers implement writing instruction. The writing curriculum has been developed by the Resource office and is available for teachers to study and use.[15] It says that teaching writing can help students in the workplace, in going on to further education and in meeting personal goals. Employers often indicate that workers need more language skills to perform successfully on the job and so it seems writing instruction is critical.

The curriculum emphasizes the stages of the writing process and steps the teacher can use in teaching writing in the classroom. Journal writing is mentioned as one type of writing that can be used in the classroom. The materials also involve information on how to teach writing at the different levels of ESL. For example, at the beginning level, students can be asked to write a simple phrase in response to a question such as "Where are you going?" It is at the intermediate level that teachers are encouraged to use journal writing to tell about their ideas, feelings and experiences. From this book, it can be seen that the SDCCD encourages writing and provides teachers with information about teaching writing.

California Statewide ESL Model Standards

The SDCCD ESL department is in the process of implementing the California Statewide ESL Model Standards.[16] These model standards are comprised of program standards, curricular standards and instructional standards. Within the model standards there is guidance on writing. These broad standards are as follows:

Program Standards

- There is an articulated sequence of ESL from low to high competency.
- The program has a curriculum and learning objectives for each level.
- This program emphasizes language focus and information all content in life skills, vocational skills and academic skills.
- Each program uses multiple measures to assess language proficiency for placement and promotion to the next level.

Curricular Standards

- Curriculum is focused on meeting students needs as determined by assessment of student language proficiencies and their goals and interests.
- ESL integrates vocabulary, grammar, language functions and pronunciation around topics of interest to the students.
- The instruction considers students' literacy skills.

Instructional Standards

- Instruction integrates the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to emphasize the holistic nature of language.
- language tasks consist of meaningful interchanges that enhance students communicative competence.
- Instruction provides help in real-life situations.
- The receptive skills are emphasized before the productive skills (i.e., listening before speaking; reading before writing).
- Try to achieve student centered instruction.
- Pay attention to learning styles.
- Teach U.S. culture.
- Develop language necessary for higher thought processes.
- Engage students in active learning.

Student Evaluation

- Use a variety of assessment measures for placement
- Continue monitoring student achievement of objectives identified in the course outline through a variety of infomal tests.
- Assessment for moving from one level to another should measure both general language proficiency and mastery of specific instructional content.

The specific writing guidance given in the ESL model standards depend upon the level of the ESL student. The articulated sequence of ESL from low to high competency referred to above is that there are seven levels of ESL from the lowest, which is orientation level ESL, to two levels of beginning ESL (low and high), to the same for intermediate level students, to the same for advanced students. At each level, it is suggested what the student should be able to do in terms of grammar, complexity of language, and topics. As will be discussed further in the next chapter, a writing rubric was developed for this project from the ESL model standards.

The writing rubric reveals the different expectations for the different levels of ESL. The expectations involve vocabulary, topics, grammar, number of words and sentences and how related the sentences are.

JOURNAL WRITING
FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF TWO ACTION RESEARCHERS

What is the value of journal writing in adult classes? It is in part a setting of the stage to prepare immigrants to process and improve their writing. We were able to see from the journal entries that are being quoted that they do become better and better. But it is more than that. It is also a good way each student can make sense out of his or her new world and begin the process of becoming an integral part in it; it is a good way for them to give meaning to their own experiences and learn about themselves. Their grammar may not be perfect, but as we read students' entries, we can see that they express themselves poetically and creatively. We can see they have opinions and are happy to express them.

> *I have read about Amish people. The small story told about people. Who live in modern, axelerated world, but they live closed and very still. They don't use cars, they don't have any confortable conditiond in their life absolutly. And I think, that it's really wonderful, because they choose it themself*

Journal writing is also a good way for teachers is to understand the students better and help them in their assimilation process. Teachers can understand aspects of adult immigrant students they may have never considered before.

Teachers can use the entries to prepare lessons that deal with the issues the students are dealing and struggling with. In an entry as this one below, teachers could select topics for a few months of teaching.

During the week, I was kind of depressed because I had to miss my best frieend's wedding ceremony. I met heer at my university and we spent a lot of time together. People called us a thread and a needle. After getting married, I was always worried about her because she didn't care about man. Only thing she wants to do is going to the acthredra; and prraying. She was smart enought to get a scholarship for whole 4 years, but she wa unluckly to have a good job. I feel very sorry for her. However, she is happy and satisfied for everything. My husband and I call her and angel. I surely understand how her mom enforced her to get married like my mom did to me. She said she wanted her mom to be free taking care of her. Marrying with this man she will be happy. I also know very much because he was my classmate. hoping her happy marriage, I can't believe we are already two married women from dreamful two girls. How fast time goes.

An instructor could present lessons dealing with cultural issues such as marriage customs, wedding customs, educational systems, religious beliefs, the rituals surrounding children passing into adulthood, and ethnic customs. The teacher could introduce units on friendship, depression, employment, dreams, and reality. Any of these themes, and others, could be selected simply by reading what the students write.

Teachers could also use essays to see grammatical errors and structure grammar lessons. Lessons would not be taught strictly for "grammar," but in a value-added way where students can develop a better sense of communicating with teachers and fellow immigrants. This would broaden their initiative for learning the technical aspects of grammar.

I have some things about studying English I began to learn English language when I came here 9 months ago. And I started studying from ABC. I like English Very, Very like. Even though I know that I don't have any exta(or great) abilityees, I think I could know and speak better, than I do it after 9 months. I'm not sad. I try to absorb everything, but I need in sistem. I tryed to translate Russian poetry-songs from Russian to English Peter said to me, that is impossible to translate a poetry from one language to another one,

But it won't be possible to make it beautiful as an instant poetry is. And alsol want to say, that every foreign language always depends on your own, language. I means that if your native language and comprehension are poor, your foreign language will be poor, too.

Although newcomers are provided with many images of American life through movies and television, it is adult school that gives many immigrants their first realistic introduction to the new life they have chosen. It is here that they learn English and American culture. It is here that they learn America is made up of many ethnic groups, many immigrants like themselves who can't yet communicate in English. It is here that they make friends and learn how to work together. It is here that they learn to resolve conflicts, make choices and allow others to make choices different from theirs. It is here they can appreciate themselves as well as others. It is here they accept that everyone relocated to the US for basically the same reasons: to improve their life and the lives of their family members. And it is we who see that, if given a chance, immigrant ESL adult students are not afraid to work hard, put in long hours, and improve their lives, and in so doing, our lives as well.

I have work alone, and I take the bus, because is very far away from my job,but I am happy with it. I take 3 bus. The first number 7 The Dowtan, the second is the muber 50 to UTC and the last is 301 going to the oceanside but to stop in Del Mar Haights and 4 St.

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CHAPTER TWO

WHAT'S IN A LEVEL?

"I went to the school during 14 years, I got a certificate as Nurse Register from Unibversity of _____. I studied in my native state until to begin to study Nursing, that was in my country. I think the Educational System in my country is good, because the career as a Nurse is recognize in this country." (Level 4 - High Intermediate)

CALIFORNIA MODEL STANDARDS AND ESL LEVELS

As Chapter One has discussed, the field of ESL in the state of California has delineated seven levels of ESL. In the system where this project took place, the SDCCD, these seven levels of ESL are observed through tracking of incoming students to the seven levels. The beginning level is the Orientation level. This is for people who can barely communicate in English at all.

"1 - Went the doctor 2 - I went the Park 3 - I Went to Casino"

From this example, it can be suspected that the individual is responding to the very specific questions of the teacher and was probably given the vocabulary words used in this journal entry. The student wouldn't be capable using English to write more complicated thoughts of his/her own at this point.

There are six more levels from Low Beginning, High Beginning, Low Intermediate, High Intermediate, Low Advanced, and High Advanced. In order to determine what comprises a level, the California State ESL Model Standards were consulted and everything mentioned about writing was consolidated into a level-by-level writing rubric. Since the orientation level was used, the highest level in the rubric (Level 6) would really correspond with a Level 7 in the Model Standards, and so on.

Using the rubric, a Level 1 journal entry would look like these examples:

I'm from Italy I came in to the United States 1 months I live in San Diego now. I live with my Uncle, my aunt and my cousin's. My family live in Italy. I miss them.

Today is February 14 Valentin day Today practice Englihs in my class wtih my frens tomorrow I go to the party with my sons.

Level 2 would have more connecting words to make compound sentences and would be like this example:

When I drive, my father and my brother are with me and sometimes my sousins and my sister. In I drove always, cars, because sometimes the people is very crazy for drive. My boyfriend was nervous when I was driving.

Even the following entry would be a Level 2, although it is very short.

My father he is medium weight he straight gray , long, hair. he has brown eyes and he is my best frien.

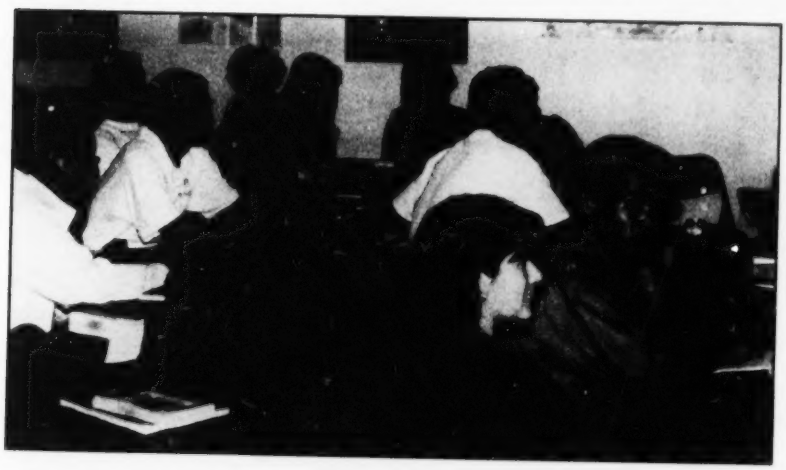
And this next entry would still be a Level 2 because the sentence structure is still so rudimentary.

yesterday I went to my job. and I worked 6 hours, 4 pm to 10 pm and my job I had been a mistake because the manager don't tell me nothing. I made 20 kind of pizza. I came back to 11 pm to my house. My family is eleep, and I cook my dinner

A Level 3 writer would use more related sentences using adverbial clauses:

Recently in Thailand was flooded. It got a lot of victims. There are many provinces get trouble to solve. The government have to work hard and help a lot of poor people who got the damages. Especially the field of Rice was destroyed. The famers are poorring and Rice price is arisen. The poorest people is very poor becuse they have a mall pay not enough money to buy rice nad food to support their families.

I enjoy alot the games that we play at the end of the class, it help as to improve our vocabulary, in a really amusing way. Some think that I found in this class, and I appreciate so much, is the possibility to know differents cultures. I can say that today, friday, is a very interesting day to improuve oru writing. I've never been on friday before, and I didn't know that friday classes where so goods.



Level 4 would use adjectival clauses and indirect speech with more verb tenses and conditional statements. This is an example:

Firstable, I'm very happy to can attend this class because I need to improve very much my English. I think that you will be able to really help me. At first glance, your class is very interesting and it seems pretty vaaaraied and complete. We have to especially listen by also read and wwwrite. In fact, I find that's well to have weekly a story with a new vocabulary.

How I keep my job. In my country, I was a tutor in the university. At first time, my salary is very low and I had to work hard all day. Sometime, I worked more than 70 hours a week. More than a half of my students were older than me. They looked like my uncles or my aunts. I helped them how to use computer and make program on computer that is a reason I wanted to give up and looked for another job better.

By Level 5, the writer is adding modifying words, clauses and phrases and using transition words within and between paragraphs. The verb tenses include past conditional (I would have arrived on time), passive simple past (The book was delivered) and passive future (The book will be delivered). The following is an example:

General Colin Powell has decided not to run for President In my opinion, this could be a very patience way to make him popular for next election. Maybe, he knows that now is to early to run as a president. Maybe I'm wrrong but I'm not, I think that this is good method to win prestige from the white people. I don't know what the American society think abot him and I don't put away the possibility that Colin Powell could be a president of the U.S. in some day. It's a fact that many people in this country descriminate against black people. This could be a desventege for Colin Powell.

The story that we read this week was very interesting because I think all the animals have a special form of coommunication and sometimes we don't put any attention on that, they are very smart and I hear about many cases where animals prevent at his owners when they were in danger. We have to take good care of them, becaue they have feelings, too, they know when people love them, when people hate them and is nice to have a pet at home.

Level 6 reveals writing using techniques of comparison/contrast, cause/effect, generalization/example and exposition. Of the journal entries rated for the substudy of change in writing to be described next, only two level 6 ratings were assigned and they turned out to be for the same individual who was rated the same for the pre and the post writing samples. Here is an example of this individual's writing:

At this time of the last year, I received a very special gift from my classmates and teachers. I didn't expect anything at all so I was surprized a lot. To retrospect, it was the most thankful give I've every had since I got a pencil-case which had 6 pencils inside from my daddy when I was 7 years old. It was so sweet that I even cried. To be frank, I was kind of nervous to be a mom. Being alone here in the U.S.A. I felt it was like an isolated world from the earth. I didn't know what I have to prepare, expect, and endure. Fortunately I had a wonderful advisor, Jackie. I'm thankful for her because she showed her love and explained a lot about being a mom.

I didn't have enough chance to say "thank" her sincerely. Now I want to say "Jackie, thank you for allyour help and teaching. I'll never forget you. The more I am with you, the more I am confident. I'll never forget you. Now the final day is coming when we have to go to my country. I'll miss you a lot, and ... I love you.

From the examples of the six different levels, one can see various changes in addition to grammatical ones. The topics do change a bit to be more about what is going on here in the United States as opposed to thinking about where they come from and why they are here. Also, the essays get longer and more complex.

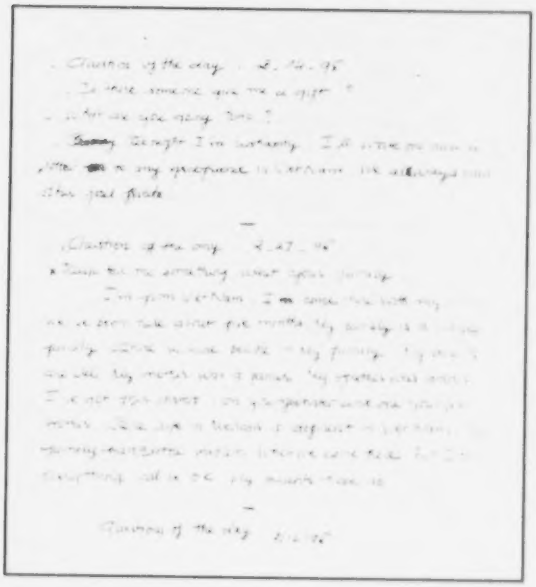
A Study of ESL student writers from pre to post writing assessment.

The idea of placing ESL students into different levels presented us with a way to see if individuals changed in their writing ability during the course of instruction; if the ratings improved, it would show that language ability was improving. Therefore, a sub-study was conducted which analyzed the pre and post writings of 180 students. The criteria for student selection in this study were that the student had to have more than one journal entry and the first and last entries had to be separated by more than a month's time. Although we had a total of 1248 journal entries, only 180 students met the criteria for this study. Therefore, only 360 journal entries were rated.

In addition to the question of whether students improve their English ability through the instruction they receive, there were other issues of interest in this study. We wondered whether or not the rating rubric had any predictive value - and in asking this question, we were indirectly asking "Are there really seven levels of ESL that are discernable?" It was also of interest to see how well students were placed in the seven levels of ESL. Teachers complain quite a bit about the difficulties of teaching multi-level courses and assignment of students to different levels is supposed to take care of this. But, does it?

THE METHODOLOGY USED TO RATE THE STUDENT ESSAYS WAS AS FOLLOWS.

- The essays were stripped of all identifying information such as name, class, teacher's name, and whether the entry was pre or post.
- Then, one of the researchers read all the 360 entries and rated them according to the writing rubric. All in all, the rating process took about twenty hours (not done all at once, of course).
- A second ESL teacher rated a sub-sample of the writings, drawn randomly. The correlation between the initial rater and the second rater was .81 showing a high degree of inter-rater reliability.



ARE THERE SEVEN LEVELS OF ESL?

In the 360 journal entries rated, all six levels of the rating scale were used, although the "six" level was used only twice, and this for the same person. When the second rater completed the task, the same six levels were used and the inter-rater reliability was .81. This suggests that there are seven levels of ESL that are discernable.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE LEVELS OF STUDENT WRITING FOUND IN THE SUB-STUDY.

After the journal entries were rated according to the six levels of ESL, they were decoded back into their identification according to classes. In this part of the study, there were five classes participating: a beginning level class, two multi-level classes (mostly with low level students), a Level 4/5 class and a Level 6/7 class. The numbers of students rated at each level for each class in the pre-writing is shown in Table 1.

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TABLE 1 RATINGS BY CLASS FOR PRE WRITING

Class	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Level 1 (N = 67)	59	6	2			
Mult 1 - 3 (N = 17)	12	5				
Multi 1 - 3 (N = 53)	45	6	1	1		
Level 4 / 5 (N = 8)		2	5	1		
Level 6 / 7 (N = 35)	2	5	17	7	3	1

These data show that students are mostly rated at Level 1 and 2 in the Level 1 class and the multi-level classes. At the Levels 4/5 and 6/7, there are higher ratings. Remember that since the orientation level has been skipped in the writing rubric, the Levels correspond to the next higher level in the Model Standards, so the data here show that at Level 4/5, the majority of students are at Level 4. In the Level 6/7 class the highest number of students are at Level 4, too, but there are quite a few at the Level 5 and a few at the Level 6. The data for the post ratings are presented in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2 RATINGS BY CLASS FOR POST WRITING

Class	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
Level 1 (N = 67)	60	5	2			
Mult 1 - 3 (N = 17)	13	4				
Multi 1 - 3 (N = 53)	46	6		1		
Level 4 / 5 (N = 8)		1	5	2		
Level 6 / 7 (N = 35)	1	3	13	10	7	1

These post data show very little change from the pre to the post ratings for the Level 1 class or the multi-level classes. There is more obvious change in the Level 6/7 class and some at the Level 4/5. First, however, it should be mentioned that the SDCCD ESL classes were part of Continuing Educationand therefore non-credit. As such, the classes require no fee, and are open-entry/open-exit.

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Students typically do not attend classes for the full hours available to them so it is possible that although these students had a month's separation between their pre and post writing, they did not attend school regularly enough to be expected to change dramatically. And, we really wouldn't expect large changes after a month's, or even a semester's instruction. Another consideration is the higher change in the Level 6/7 class as compared to the others. In this class there was a great deal of reading and vocabulary. Krashen would say that this would facilitate the writing process and perhaps this did happen. At the Level 4/5 class there was an emphasis on communication and there do appear to be some changes.

Change in writing level and grammar and spelling.

How much change was there in the qualitative writing ratings from pre to post condition? In this small study, which only considered a month's worth of instruction, there wasn't too much change for the classes, except for the most advanced class. Table 3 shows the number of students for each class who go up and those who go down in ratings for their pre and post writings.

Table 3 Numbers of Students whose Ratings Went Up and Went Down by Class

Class	# Go Up	# Go Down
Level 1 (N = 67)	6	7
Mult 1 - 3 (N = 17)	2	3
Multi 1 - 3 (N = 53)	3	4
Level 4 / 5 (N = 8)	2	0
Level 6 / 7 (N = 35)	12	2

From these data, as mentioned above, it appears that only those students at the highest level improved their writing noticeably. Those at the lower levels for the most part stayed the same, and although some went up, an equal number went down. Now, this could be an artifact of the rating.

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Any error in the rating process could be responsible for these particular data. However, assuming that the error is equally spread across all classes rated, it still appears that the highest level students made more improvement than those at the lower levels. At the Level 4/5, there were only two students who improved their ratings, but there are only 8 students in the sample.

In addition to qualitative ratings of level, analyses were also conducted to determine the number of sentences in each writing, the number of words and the number of spelling errors. Table 4 reveals means and standard deviations for qualitative ratings plus the number of sentences, the number of words used and the spelling mistakes.

TABLE 4
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR PRE AND POST QUALITATIVE RATINGS, NUMBERS OF SENTENCES, WORDS AND SPELLING ERRORS

	Pre-Rating	Post-Rating	Pre Senten	Post Senten	Pre Words	Post Words	Pre Spell	Post Spell
Mean	1.66	1.73	5.64	5.83	51.52	55.43	2.87	2.88
St. Dev.	1.06	1.20	3.03	3.56	33.49	36.92	2.40	2.69
Min.	1.00	1.00	1.00	16.00	10.00	8.00	0.00	0.00
Max	6.00	6.00	16.00	18.00	261.00	204.00	14.00	12.00

From these data, it appears that there is very little mean change from pre to post on any of the ratings. It was assumed that as people wrote more, they would use more sentences and more words. This is true, they did go up, although marginally. The number of spelling errors were not expected to change because they were not corrected and no attention was paid to them, and they actually went up a small bit.

ARE STUDENTS PLACED ACCURATELY INTO THESE SEVEN LEVELS?

Reviewing Tables 1 and 2, it would appear that if the writing ratings by level were used as an indication of the ESL level of the students, the placement is not very accurate. All classes show a wide range of students at different levels. It could be, however, that the placement decision leans more toward spoken ability and reading comprehension and that these students, even those who write at a lower level, actually speak and read at a much higher and more uniform level.

These data present interesting information that we would suggest could be studied further. The writing rubric could be used as an assessment device in the classroom and a check for placement. It could also be used as a way to show students whether or not they have improved their writing. This information is only rudimentary and only leads to more questions, but the promise is there for more inquiry and understanding.

CHAPTER THREE

ADJUSTMENT TO AMERICAN LIFE: REVEALING ISSUES THAT MATTER THROUGH ESL WRITING

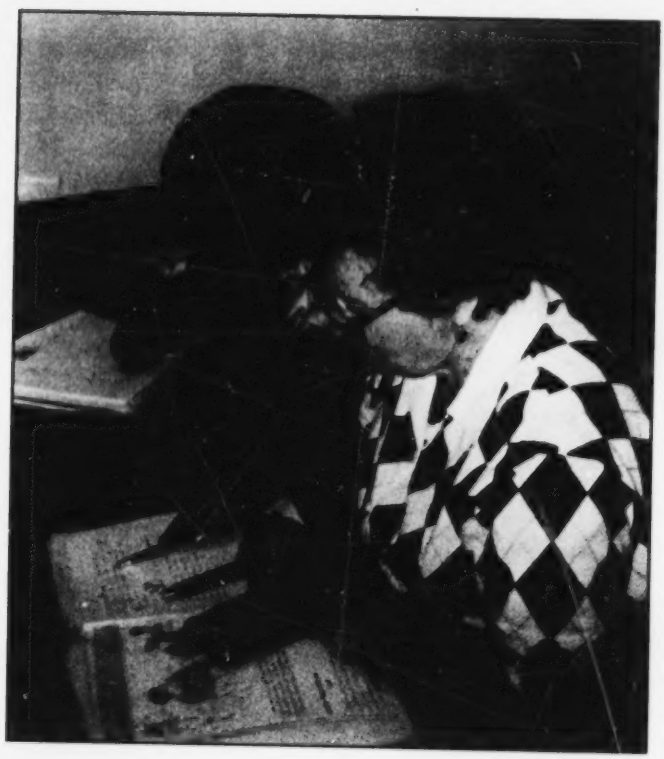
Tacos the squash flower. In my country people sow squash. When it rains. When the plant grows bears flowers and the cutting preparation the flower squash cook for 20 minutes in oil and onion, sal and epazote. To eat withe corn tortilla.

OVERVIEW

When immigrants and refugees come to the United States and begin life here, what is is like for them? As teachers and researchers, we see them in the hallways of adult schools, lining up to register for English classes, we see them in the classes and we see them move from class to break and back to class. In these settings, we see but do not communicate much with them because we have no language in common and they are frequently speaking their native language with someone they have met from their old country. Even if we do strike up a conversation in English, the conversation is very halted and slow, the topics generally superficial. Often in the classroom, the teachers learn more about the lives of their students. But unless one has a significant period of time with students, this will not happen either. For all these reasons, adjustment to American Life is not understood. So, we turn to the literature to find out what life is like for newcomers.

The literature on cultural adjustment is enormous. The library's stacks contain shelves and shelves of books on acculturation, assimilation, adjustment and adaptation. ESL teachers may be familiar with all this literature and use it to understand their students better but we felt we needed to know more about theories of acculturation and assimilation before we analyzed the student writing more because we believed we were seeing stages of adjustment through the journal entries. Acculturation refers to the long term process of adapting to new cultural behaviors that are different from one's primary learned culture.[1] Acculturation is a long process and is the result of prolonged cultural contact which eventually leads to a person changing to adapt to the new culture.

Another term used is cultural adaptation[2] which involves survival skills of shopping, banking, transportation and the like. The assumption is that attitudes and behaviors toward the new culture will change but that it will be a slow process: two steps forward, one step back. That is because it is stressful to adapt and change to a new lifestyle with new customs, beliefs and attitudes. There are various communication factors worth mentioning here that influence long-term adaptation. We see evidence of this in the journal writing. First is ethnic identification where new immigrants and refugees seek out familiar people with customs and language they know. Sometimes groups have managed to maintain their ethnic ties in what is referred to as cultural pluralism. In San Diego, there are many ethnic enclaves that maintain cultural pluralism, many of them within the communities served by the adult schools we studied. Kim[3] says while it is natural to seek others in the same situation and from the same culture, too strong an identification with the home country can prohibit or seriously reduce adaptation.



The second factor influencing adaptation is intercultural friendship. Studies show that as time passes and intercultural friendships develop, people adapt more easily. In one study of Korean immigrants, this process seemed to be complete by five years after coming to the United States.[4] Intercultural friendship goes along with other kinds of cultural involvement and a person will adapt to the new culture if there is motivation to do so, if there is linguistic competence, with more education, and with dual membership in the old and new groups. Finally, getting a job and trying to advance help the process immeasurably.[5]

Other literature has referred to adjustment to life in a new country in terms of stages of adjustment. Rhinesmith[6] mentions three stages. First, there is excitement and fascination with the new culture. Everything is seen in terms of promise and possibility. But then, when reality hits and problems are encountered with housing, work, school, and the new language, the next stage of culture shock sets in. In this stage there is strain and desire to revert back to an easier life. Finally, the third stage involves adjustment to everyday activities where there is more comfort involved in daily life and routine. At this point, adaptation begins. In our journal essays we saw some evidence of stages of adjustment, too. They appeared somewhat similar to all that has been mentioned above.

An important part of our study of student writing concerned the topics that students wrote about. After reviewing all the student writing, we were left with several impressions. First, we were touched by the writing that we read. It was interesting and moving and revealing. For every journal entry presented in this report, there were dozens that were equally interesting. Second, we noticed that there were some common issues among the student writers which we decided to further analyze. We didn't see too much of the stage of adjustment that Rhinesmith identified as early excitement and fascination with the new culture. We believe this is because many of the students who have come to take ESL have been in the U.S. for a while and have been through this stage and are now in the stage where they realize they will have to learn English, so they are coming to ESL classes. So, we meet the learner in the second stage of missing their country, making sense of why they came to America and being frustrated with their progress. Then we move on from there. Finally, we noticed many common issues among writers at different levels of ESL proficiency.

The Stages of Adjustment Witnessed in the ESL Writing

Assimilation, the learning process by which something new is related to what is already known is a process that adult immigrants can describe yet for anyone who has not experienced it, it is impossible to fully comprehend. To ask adult immigrants to take their habits, customs, traditions, language and historical figures and fuse them into our society is a great request.

Imagine the frustration of being an adult and migrating to a country where you cannot ask for directions, understand minute parts of conversations, read basic signs, write out bills, use the phone, ride a bus, order food in a restaurant, understand TV, visit your relatives, go to church, understand the significance of native holidays, or most basic, find employment.

I left China is 2 years 3 months ago I firsh lived in chicago. because early live in U.S. I dond't know speak English and donnn't have friends. I went to looking for job is very difficult.

The theme that is most obvious in the first levels of ESL and in the first bit of time in the new country is loneliness and a comparison with the old country.

in Sandiego very cold for me. I think the long time I will becoming the weather in Veietnan too but a little cold. The winter begin first November until January.

The first time I came to lived in the United State. Is because I got married but the first thing I miss was my family and my country my little nieces my friends the first months was so hearth to lived here and the united state every thing was different I don't have any friend's it was hearth to me because I don't onder stand too much ingles and I domt speake to much ingles. but after the first year a have my son and I lean ingles an ander stand a little more ingles .

Several journal entries, while showing signs of homesickness, do not allow us to assign the word "tragic" to their situations. They still have their memories of their own country and manage to cope by thinking about them.

I am Gaston, and, I am from CD. Obregon, Sonora, Mexico. Obregon is a big city with factories and companies assemblers, aroound this city there is a big valley in where you can to sow corn, cotton, wheat, ajd vegetalles I miss my city, because I have all my fends and familay there.

Tragedy comes if immigrants do not become part of their new country: they do not learn English, find jobs, become involved in their children's school and do not allow themselves to be assimilated into the American way of life. This is not to make any value judgments about cultures; it is to say that this is where they now live. At some point, they must have pride in their new country as they will always have with their native country.

I'm from Tijuana Baja California. is a big city day have a lot of works like Electronic factoy and welding factory and construction and a lot of traffic and a good plaaces for the kids to have fun, lots of dancing clubsa nd a berry good food. Museums you can see a lot of are argiculture. I feel good about my city. Ilike my city berry much. especially the food the tortillas they make with hands. the bread a lot of good things they have. I feel proud of about my city

What we begin to understand is that because the new arrivals have not mastered their new language, they may be fearful of venturing into unknown areas. They have yet to go to the movies, the children's museum, or simply to any of the recreational areas for fear that they may be misunderstood or may misunderstand. Of course their former city is "all beautiful" in their eyes. They remember their country through rose-colored glasses.

I am from Guatemala City., the city is a busy because to many people work ther we have a lot of factories and also people selling in the streets. the food in restaurants are very good I like my Country but is very poor to live ther aslo I miss my family. In spite of the fact I do love my counjtry.

The tragedy is wishing to leave their new country but not being able (for whatever reasons) to return to their native country. They feel they belong nowhere.

Frst of all when, i felt strange because of the Language I found the Peoples spoke English. The second difficult thing I had to facew was that I didn't have any place to live. so I have to sleep in my car. The third thing, I had was the I didn't have enough money to leave.

The basic stages of settling in a new land include the initial euphoria about being in a new and exciting country, followed by depression , and at some point acceptance of reality as one climbs out of the depression. Some make a rather remarkable recovery, others start up only to slide down again. Most immigrants, from whatever part of the world they come, whether they are young or old, educated or non educated, legal or illegal, male or female, from the East or the West, pass through many of the same highs and lows while they are settling into the U.S.'

This is not to say that everyone experiences the same emotions simultaneously; it is merely to suggest there are stages of adjustment all immigrants must experience. Some immigrants pass rather quickly through the stages, some get stuck in one phase, others in another, and others move up and down in the stages. They may have left their beloved country for political reasons, but, they still love their country. They are trying to bond with their new life; in the process, they remember their country.

My country is small but very beautiful I lived very long time in that country I had many friends they very loved me amd me too. I very like and love my country, but I left it. Because I don't like my government. I came to U.S.A. to enjoy freedom, too.

Not all left for political reasons. However, they also write about their country nostalgically.

In my town it's a very nice place to live. It's small and almost all the people know each other and is very good because everybody feels so good we have some dates that are special and the whole town celebrates those dates. Sometimes I wish I could go back to it so I go to see every person in my life.

A common theme is that they have lost an important part of their community and need support to make the transition to a new life. As they express it, the need for community is intimately connected with need for family.

FAMILY

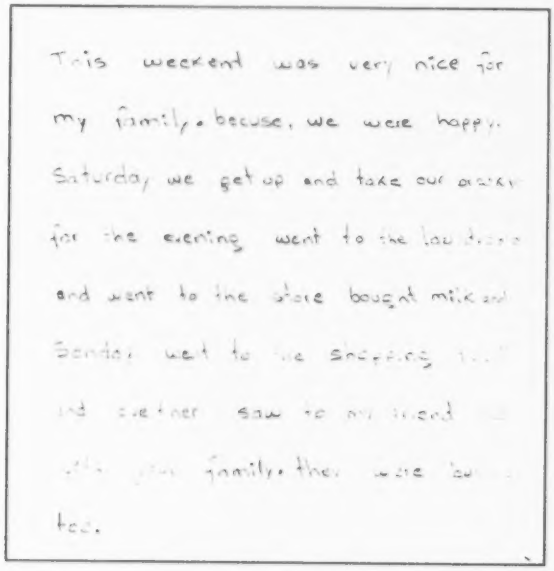
The two writings below reflect a common theme of many immigrant journal writings. In the first entry, a beginning student uses few words in expressing an attachment to family as a source of happiness:

My family happy I feel happy too.

An intermediate level writer, using many words and more complex structures, also expressed his happiness in his surroundings which include his family and his community:

My name is LY. I'm from Viet Nam. I lived in a house in a small town. I was a studnt in Viet Nam. I likle to play ppiano and soccr. I finish 12 years of high school.

I came to the US. January 12, 1996. I came with my sisters and brother. I felt happy.about moving here. I speak Vietnamese and some English. In future I want to go to colloge now I don't speak English perfectly.


This weekent was very nice for my family, becuse, we were happy. Saturday we get up and take our asses for the evening went to the laundrie and went to the store bought milk and Sunday wet to the shopping [illegible] and eveiner saw to my friend [illegible] family, ther were [illegible] tee.

One might conclude that both the lower level writer and the higher level writer are saying the same thing. They are happy with their families; their families are the reason for their happiness.

One yar ago, when I was in VN I crebrarat on Christmans Day. It was a wonderful Day for me to attend on the Day. Every year On Christmas Day I usually receive a gift from my brothers and sisters are in U.S.A. while I was opened the gift I started crying and missed them. I thought, what should I do with this present and how could I make them feel happy when they just send that to me. I was so excited. At that time, I wished if I could live with them in U.S.A. I would like to help them everything they need. From this point I kep and useit very carefully to give them pleâsuer again I try to tell them how excited that I got but I am living with my brothers and sisters right now, we are very happy to bring all my family here and live together.

What connects many journal entries of all students, no matter the age, the place of origin, the gender, or the situation under which students came to this country, is the longing for the "family," for the "community" left behind in their journey to the USA.

Students in our adult classes at the San Diego Community College come from different continents; their longing is the same: they want to return to their families, to their communities. They want the friendships and the relationships that they will spend so much time trying to consummate here, if they ever do. Many immigrants come from countries where family and filial piety are revered. They are not prepared for their introduction into the American life of "individualism." Essays frequently accent the happiness that comes from living with family:

I feel happy when I meet my people.

I feel happy with my family.

We went to the park . My children and me bought corns, and my daughter she gave of eat at all the birds, her corns, and she was happy, happy, and me too were happy saw them. After we went to visit my brother, and in the night returned at home to sleep and to dream.

We would expect that this family's dreams were ones of peace and contentment. The family had traveled to their own country, crossing the U.S. border to Mexico, and bathed in the security of their roots and returned to their new country to dream of happy memories. Perhaps this trip and the dreams that accompany it will be important factors in hastening their assimilation process. Other immigrants cannot visit their country and, while missing it terribly, allow themselves to be assimilated. Their dreams are also that life in America will be happy. These entries below suggest a certain amount of ambivalence about having left their country. Do they want to go back? Do they want to remain where they have settled? As Americans, we would be more direct in our ambivalence. We would leave no doubt in the mind of the reader that we are counting the days until we return to "our" country, or we would write that we are going to stick it out. Asian newcomers have not yet learned such 'Yankee" directness.

I'm Korea people I like my country because my family in my country live, and food, mountain, beach, foot ball.

I'm have one sister in China, she don't come here.
My sister younger than me.
I am sometimes homesick write to china my sister.
I am very miss in China the relatives.

Then we have students who fondly write about their city, but are definite about where they are going to stay.

> *In Mexico City I have many friends and I have one house for living in my country I have I son and I daughter He is busines Admnistrations y She is nurse my two sons have sons Iam so happy in my new country USA*

There are immigrants who aren't sure whether they will become a part of this new life or return to their roots. Life in a new country, with different customs, foods, and language seems too overwhelming to them. It wasn't what they had planned for when they left their land. They have a sense of confusion and ambivalence, as expressed in this entry.

> *I think to return to Mexico the next month.*
> *I want working in Mexico and after to marry.*
> *I return to stay in Mexico (maybe).*

We can hope that their insecurity exists because they don't know yet what their new country will offer to them. Some will never know as they will either return to their country of origin or make little or no attempt to fit in. Others, as they begin to acquire more English skills, will open themselves to new and life enhancing experiences. This is why the ESL community is important - to provide a "substitute family". Two aspects of this are familiarity- warmth and support- and role models for moving beyond the community. One way to enhance the sense of familarity is through discussion of food.

FOOD

Food has been called the soul of a country. It is a topic all immigrants write about. Their memories of their native food brings great comfort to them. In a way, writing about food is a metaphor for the riches of a life they lived before coming to the US and the blandness of life they are living here. In actuality, the richness is not richness but familiarity, and familiarity, of any kind, is a source of comfort.

> *The people in my countrry, Nayarit, Mexica, make a special dish called shrimp ceviche. Which is delicious to eat. We make a special dish that we eat almost evry in the summer. To prepare thsi dish we peel the Shrimp, squeeze lemon and chop tomatoes, jalapeno chilis, onion and cucumber.*

We mixture these ingedients. When the shrimp is ready we eat this dishwith tostadas or creckers and dring beer and soda. The seafood is a special food in my country. Nayarit, Mexico.

I like make: Mole poblano, chiles rellenos, Mole verde, Pozole, Menudoevferything.

The first generation immigrant keeps her/his country's soul for their lifetime. It is a comfort that is impossible to give up. It is the young people, the generations that follow that will move on to a new "soul" food. The second generation will keep some of the original "soul", and combine elements of the new "soul". An eighteen year old from Kenya responded this way in answer to a set question:

What do you like to eat? I like cake-whopper-chicken

A wonderful way to open up a discussion in a class is to get everyone to talk about their ethnic food. A great way to break down cultural barriers is to plan class pot lucks. A marvelous way to introduce students to American culture is (for the teacher) to roast a turkey and bring it in near Thanksgiving.

Starting to Adjust: Role Models

Role models are an important part of all cultures. We learn how to become social beings by observing other people in our culture. When we move to another culture, we need additional role models. Especially for immigants, coming from countries which teach great respect for teachers, the most available role models will often be their teachers. The first Americans they get to know well are their ESL teachers. This American becomes for them Teacher and role model.

I love my English class particularly my teacher. Her class is the theate for one actor I love the first part of class-news, I hate gramma but my teacher even this boring part make interesting. My teacher is bautiful lady and ver talented person.

In this week, I have just studdied three days so I am really sorry about that. However, I am still feel good about school in the U.S. specially Mid City Center because it is very friendly and helpsull. Students when they come to school they don't need to buy anything alse but their time to study English. So, when I came to school, I feel everyody who work in school look like waiting for students.

Immigrants have other role models besides their teachers. Students also find role models while in school through characters presented in readings, and through their peers. These role models give students of all ages motivation not only to keep up their language lessons, but also to find hope in this new country they have adopted. In one class of an intermediate level, students, after completing a unit on Helen Keller, found inspiration from the lives of both Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan.

She (Helen Keller) really motivated me to work hard and try to do my best in my own work. The last part, when Helen knows her parents and she tell to Annis Sullivan whet she wants to lean everything. I really like that part, because she thought me that never is late for to learn new things, and if you really want to do something, you an do it! Onlt if you have determination. You must be a determined person if you want to realize your dreams. The party that I felt an impact, it was the work and determination of the teacher A Sullivan becaus she never give back on her decision for help to Helen.

Another intermediate class found role models in their peers. The class was having a graduation for several students who had completed the required course work.

Yesterday one of my class members finished her Ofice Systems VESL class. I felt happy for her Martily is an important example to me that when you want to do something you canachieve. Sometimes I thought that I couldnn't finish this program but when I saw Marilu graduation I felt emotionally and now I think that I'll to finish and I'll have a graduation too. I know that is hard si I am going to study very much. When I saw Marilu in front of the class, I feel very, very happy becaouse, I thoght I'm was giving the speech to my class, and I decide to continue my goals.

Learning to Cope

In making the adjustment to American life, there seems to be some sort of decision to make the best of it, to try to fit in and to learn English.

When I got here I felt lonely because I wast acustomed to be alone at home. anohter thing was that when my brother my sister in law and I went to big stores I found that people didn't Spanish and the most difficult thing was that I had to work with them to reach that I had to study in an adult school to learn English. It wasn't enough for me because I wanted to learn faster than I did it there. I decided to enroll in higih school and thereafter I felt more comfortable.

Other writings showed the participation of the students and their families into local activities, ones that gave them happiness.

The last saturday at 7:00 am my family and me went to the mountain because my children wants to see the snow and make snowmen and play a tumbles, in the night we returned home because my daughter was sleep in the truck. On Sunday morning we went to Los Angeles Cal a birthday party of my father in law and they cook Carne asada and ceviche and for drink soda and beer. We returned home 5:00 am on Monday because my husband had will going to his job.

In another journal entry, a student talks about a strategy for making friends.

> *When you meet a stranger for the first time, first introduce your self show your self that you'd like to know her or him tell her where are you from and where you are, if she ask you which part of Africa you from tell her exatly wich part are you from and tell her about your country. If she want to know you more about yourself tell her that you too you want to know her and you want her to tell you more about her country to, and gfive her you tel number where she can rich you for the next day or after a week were you and her you can meet and discarse about your country and her hometown. After that, call her make an apointment its the way people start to get together more and knowing each other more and more.*

We can see that these individuals are well on the way to adjustment to their new culture. In this following essay, it is clear that by participating in the events that the new culture has to offer, the newcomer can find ways to be happy.

Holiday of the Soul

I had a free time. AS I had it, I would like to go for walk, to breathe by fresh sky. Some minutes later I was agitated for visit of music saloon by my mother. So, I joined her. We came to the music saloon and choosed the comfortable seats. Then a music began. Everything was quiet arount me and a light was sitched off. I have seen a big scene, abounding with musicians and their instruments. They played moonlight sonata by Beethoven. Very interesting and beautiful was those, that everyone of them hadf a candle on their music stand, which was lit and I could see the same lights were gleaming and reflecting in their eyes. All people, who sat around us, enjoyed it so much, that their looks were rivited to the scene. A music was such wonderful. By the time every musocian has stopped it's part of music, blowed out the candle and left it's place. Each after other they stopped and abandoned the scene, blowing out their lights. It seemed like a dying music. At the end, just one man, who played piano, stayed ther. A sonata was alive in his playing and in the light of the candle. then he stopped too and i have felt, thatat this moment a music really died. i was so wondered of it, that those day i colled "a holiday of soul"

Conclusion

The adult ESL student, whether in this country for a short time or for a much longer time, will always write about their memories. They should be encouraged to do so. Their recollections about what life was like when...is an integral part of their language learning. It is an integral part of their assimilation. Recalling their past lives will help them to bridge their old lives with their new. It will help them to reach outside themselves to other immigrants. Thus, it is necessary for students and teachers to begin the process of writing as soon as learning and teaching the new language begins. As students become more adept at writing, and as they begin to accept living in their adopted country, they will write with more proficiency and their language skills will continue improving.

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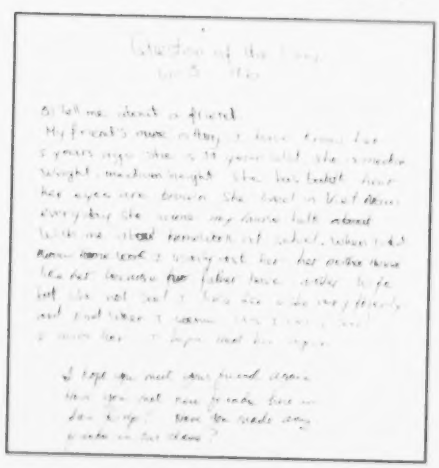
CHAPTER FOUR

USING ESL WRITING IN THE CLASSROOM

Suppose a teacher is interested in incorporating writing into the ESL classroom and has read about it but has backed away from it, thinking that it will be too much to ask of the student or too much to ask of themselves. This chapter is written with them in mind. Here we present some ideas for ways to implement writing in the classroom without overburdening the teacher or students.

DIALOGUE JOURNALS

This first method does require teacher time, but once the journal entries quoted in this report have been read, perhaps the teacher is ready to commit to reading student journal entries. Using the dialogue journal method, teachers present each student with a journal and have them write something to them. A prompt can be used, such as "What are you planning to do this weekend?" or no prompt is necessary. Then the teacher collects the journals and writes back to each student. In dialogue journals, it is not necessary to comment on the writing ("nice job - keep up the good work") or anything like that. The idea is for the teacher to respond to the students' ideas with his/her own thoughts. These responses do not have to be long. A couple of sentences can be ok. One teacher who used these type of journals in the SDCCD carried them back and forth in a carrying case. She found that students were anxious to hear what she thought and to read her comments. Sometimes she had to explain her comments to the students which made for a good language lesson. And, this teacher taught a Level 1 class.



Dialogue journals are used with ESL students because they help them develop writing fluency and it personalizes the writing. But it is a bit time consuming for the teachers.

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BUDDY JOURNALS

A buddy journal is a diary in which two students write back and forth to each other over a period of time.[1] These journals are used for many reasons. But one reason might be that the teacher cannot answer all the journal entries but still wants to use journals. Another reason is that it promotes better communication within the classroom.

Buddy journals have the advantage of communication between peers rather than between teachers and students who do not share equal status. Buddy journals provide a fairly nonthreatening way in which to practice writing and use language.

Also, the topics chosen are ones of common interests to both students so they are motivated. Sometimes buddy journals are used pairing native speaking students with ESL students.

This allows both students to learn about other cultures and customs and develop friendships which are important to motivation to come to school. In multi-level classrooms, more advanced students could work with the beginning students. Many ESL classrooms already use cooperative or group learning, so adding the writing component wouldn't be a complete shift in teaching methodology. And, one final advantage is that it allows the teacher to play the role of teacher and make corrections on both writers' work, incorporating language lessons into the feedback about their journals.

Audiotaped Responses to Journal Writing

In one classroom, the teacher had students write in journals and then the teacher read them and dictated his response into a tape recorder. Then the students listened to them at "listening stations" that had a tape recorder and a headset for privacy. In this way, students received practice writing and then had more practice in listening to a response to their writing in which much of the same vocabulary was used and the same topic was used.

Writing using Computers or Online

If a teacher has computers in the classroom, this is an opportunity to merge writing with instruction in using a word processing program on the computer. Students are generally very interested in learning to use computers and if this is combined with language experiences using their own interests and topics, motivation can be heightened.

If the teacher has access to the Internet in class, then finding an OWL (Online Writing Lab) would be interesting.[2] OWLs have as their function providing feedback so they don't operate like dialogue journals or buddy journals. However, for more advanced students, it might be an excellent way to get more information about writing. There are at present almost 200 OWLs. Many work using e-mail and provide very specific responses to questions students have about what they have written. There are OWLs available to ESL students, too.[3] While receiving feedback on-line does not take the place of face-to-face interaction it does have the advantage of teaching about computers and the Internet.

Writing with Elders

When teaching the elderly, writing is often seen as limited because older people are perceived to use it mostly for correspondence or making notes to themselves or others.

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There is a lot of evidence to the contrary.[4] Says one instructor, "A writing workshop for the elderly creates a "community of memory" in which literacy links individuals and generations."[5] Writing can be on any topic of interest to the elders and discussions can follow that focus on various themes that have been written about plus information about the craft of writing. Many times, elders want to write their family stories so that their grandchildren will know more about the history of the family. Others want to pursue poetry and short stories.

Literature and Writing

A more traditional or academic way of teaching writing is to ask students to write about literature they are reading. One teacher explained that she believed in the importance of reading good literature when learning a second language because the grammar and vocabulary and concepts this approach taught were unequaled using any other method. So, her students read many different stories and then wrote essays about what they had read. By doing this, the students reinforced the language they were learning in class and, in addition, were able to express their own thoughts about the material they were learning.

Writing as Data Collection

Whatever method of writing instruction the teacher selects, it is important to remember that writing is a language form that can be saved and revisited. By using writing to provide ongoing feedback to the students, the language learning can be documented and the students can see how much they are improving. If the teacher is so inclined, he/she can also keep records to document how much the students are learning. We found this to be a very rewarding way to understand the language learning of ESL students in the San Diego Community College District.

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Report Design And Layout - DCWorks, 1997

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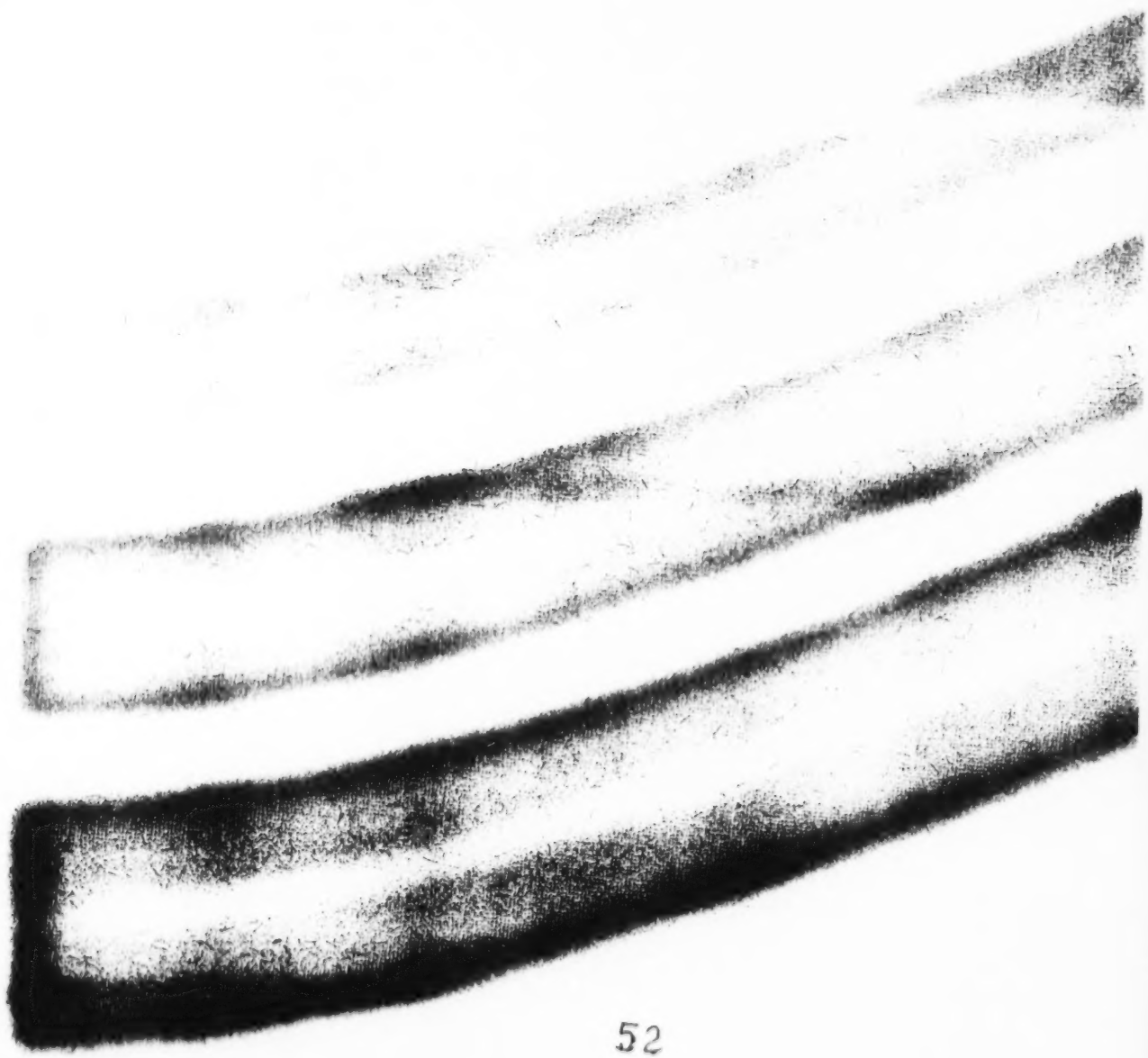

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